

## CHAPTER TWO

# Hunter Responsibility

## *The Responsible Hunter*

### Learning Objectives

*At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:*

- Describe the behavior of a responsible hunter.
- Describe how responsible hunters show respect for other people—hunters and nonhunters.
- Explain why hunting laws and regulations are important.
- Explain what is meant by “ethics” and “fair chase.”



### What makes a hunter responsible?

The answer to this question is not simple. Is a responsible hunter someone who is a good shot? Is it someone who knows where to find wildlife? Is it someone who teaches others to hunt responsibly? Perhaps the responsible hunter is someone who follows laws and regulations.

These are all essential qualities of a responsible hunter, but other things are important as well. A responsible hunter is a person who:

- Cares for wildlife and demonstrates this by respecting hunting seasons, by not abusing the land when out in the field, and by reporting poachers.
- Ensures the safety of people by wearing hunter orange, respecting shooting hours and always clearly and definitely identifying the target before aiming a firearm or squeezing the trigger.
- Provides and protects opportunities for all people to enjoy wildlife by supporting conservation efforts and by respecting others' rights and interests.
- Takes full responsibility for his or her actions by admitting and taking steps to correct mistakes, taking the initiative to learn all applicable rules and regulations, and by allowing his or her actions to be judged by others and accepting either reward or punishment.
- Knows and practices conservation by supporting efforts to protect animals, habitat, and animal populations. In other words, as hunters we don't just take from the land, we give something back.

As you can see, there is more to being a responsible hunter than just behaving well in the field, mastering outdoor skills, achieving good marksmanship, or practicing safety. Being a responsible hunter means being a responsible citizen.

### What are laws and regulations?

Look at Montana's book of hunting regulations. Why do we have so many rules? Are they really necessary? Who makes them? Who enforces them?

## Who makes laws and regulations?

Hunting laws are created with the leadership of hunters working with elected officials, who are responsible for making new laws. They are intended to protect and manage wildlife populations as well as to protect hunters. Before the establishment of these laws, many species were driven to near extinction. In response, hunters pushed for laws to regulate hunting and protect species in hopes they could recover their numbers and be enjoyed by future generations of hunters and nonhunters.

Laws come from legislators or citizen ballot initiatives. It takes time and effort to develop laws, so they don't change very often. Because of this, most states and provinces grant state wildlife agencies such as FWP authority to make regulations. Regulations are based on public input and on information provided by scientists and managers. They are easier to change than laws and are better suited to the way that wildlife is managed everyday.



## Who enforces the law?

You may have already met a game warden. The job of the warden is to make sure hunters follow the laws and regulations. A warden may ask to see your license or ask questions about when and where you have hunted. He or she may also ask to inspect any animal you have killed. Cooperate—it's the right thing to do, and it's the law!

## Know the law and obey it!

One of the qualities of a responsible hunter is that he or she knows and understands the laws that apply to his or her hunting situation. But it is not enough to know the law, you must also obey it!

*Not knowing hunting laws is not an excuse for violating them. If you hunt, you must know the laws and respect them. Ignorance is not a defense!*

Keep these guidelines in mind:

- 🦌 Read and understand Montana's hunting regulations every year.
- 🦌 Always carry a copy of the hunting regulations in the field.
- 🦌 Don't rely on others to tell you what is legal and right.
- 🦌 Make sure you have the correct licenses, permits, stamps, and tags before you go hunting.
- 🦌 The fines for some violations are in the thousands of dollars. Plus, you may lose your hunting privileges for years or life.

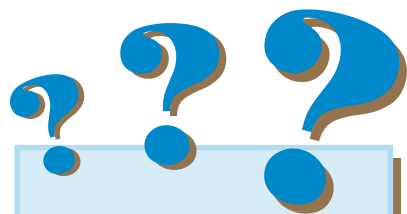
## What are ethics?

In addition to following the law, the responsible hunter develops and follows a personal code of ethics. Ethics are the rules for right and wrong, good and bad that societies and individuals develop. These rules help us to know how we should act in certain situations.

### Wasn't the bison almost wiped out by hunters?

Market hunting (killing animals for the purpose of selling their hide, meat, or parts) nearly exterminated the North American bison in the 1800s. Since there were few laws and no enforcement to protect wildlife, hunters killed as many animals as they could and did whatever they wanted with the carcasses.

At the turn of the century, concerned hunters, such as former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, banded together to form the Boone and Crockett Club. The Club worked with other organizations and citizens to pass legislation to protect wildlife for future generations. Thanks to the efforts of these early conservationists, once-rare species like white-tailed deer, elk, pronghorn, wood ducks and wild turkeys are now abundant enough for us to hunt and enjoy once again.



### Violation of Hunting Law Dilemma

A dilemma is a situation in which you have to choose between two unpleasant choices.



It was five days after the end of the deer hunting season, and David was cutting firewood from a wood lot on his farm. While loading some logs on his wagon, he heard a rifle shot which sounded fairly close to him. He didn't pay too much attention since the neighbor boy does some target shooting about once every two weeks.

As David drove his tractor and wagon back to his house, he noticed his friend Bob's pickup truck at the far end of the farm. Bob was an avid hunter who thoroughly enjoyed deer hunting. After parking his load of firewood in his driveway, David walked back to Bob's truck.

Upon arrival, he found Bob dragging a field-dressed white-tailed doe out of the woods. Bob explained that he needed some meat for the table as he has been laid off from work for over a year. His last unemployment check had arrived about five weeks ago.

When David returned to his house, he found the local game warden in his driveway inquiring about purchasing some firewood.

**What should David do?**






-  A person with good ethics is somebody who understands right and wrong, and chooses to do the right thing in any situation.
-  A person with good hunting ethics is one who will not do anything in the field he or she knows or feels is wrong, even if it is legal.

**Fair chase.** Hunters are encouraged to develop their own ethic of fair chase. Fair chase means balancing the skills and equipment of the hunter with the abilities of the animal to escape. Responsible hunters do not take unfair advantage of game animals, even if it's legal.

But how do we *know* what's right and what's wrong? All responsible hunters obey hunting laws but sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where the law doesn't tell us what to do. Unfortunately, there is not a "list" of ethical rules to help. In these cases, you must decide for yourself based on your personal sense of what is right and wrong.

***If you doubt your decision at any point, don't do it!***

Do we have enough information now to answer the question we started with—What makes a hunter responsible? Let's list what we have learned. A responsible hunter:

-  Knows and obeys laws and regulations.
-  Views hunting as more than killing an animal.
-  Develops a personal code of ethics and sticks to it.
-  Takes full responsibility for his or her actions.
-  Respects people, the land, and wildlife.

Locate each of the following topics in the regulations booklet, and write down the page number you found it on.

TOPIC	PAGE NUMBER
Purchasing licenses:	_____
Hunting seasons:	_____
Blaze orange requirements:	_____
Legal means and methods for taking game:	_____
Game tagging and transportation requirements:	_____
Trespassing laws and penalties:	_____
Special youth hunting regulations:	_____
Evidence of sex:	_____
Shooting hours:	_____

### What would you do?

You and a friend are hunting ducks on the river. The daily limit is three ducks per hunter. Your friend has bagged his three ducks and stopped hunting. You've shot two ducks and decide to try for one more. Your friend comes along. A mallard flushes from the river in perfect shooting distance. You shoot and see the duck fall, but it lands in the river and is quickly swept downstream and out of sight. You both search for the duck, but can't find it. Your friend says to forget about it, there are plenty of ducks, and one more or less doesn't make a difference. You'll be sure to find another one to shoot. You probably feel bad that you couldn't find the dead duck, but you know that the three-a-day limit counts only for ducks that you claim and bring home. Legally, you can continue to hunt for another duck. But you know that you have already killed three ducks. What do you do? Do you continue to hunt? Do you stop for the day? Your decision will be based on your personal set of ethics. Write down what you would do and why.

### Hunting: Is it a right or a privilege?

Some people believe hunting is a right similar to freedom of speech and freedom of religion. It isn't. Hunting is a privilege—one that can be taken away if you fail to meet certain standards. A right cannot be taken away from an individual; a privilege can.

For example, if you don't do your homework, your parents may take away your "television privileges." You may drive a car, but your license can be taken away if you drive irresponsibly or recklessly. Similarly, if you disobey hunting laws, your privilege to hunt may be taken away. Behaving irresponsibly and illegally can jeopardize all hunters' privileges to hunt.

### A Hunter's Code\*

1. I pledge to learn and follow the rules of firearm and hunting safety. I will require the same of my hunting partners.
2. I pledge to obey all hunting regulations. I will conduct myself in a sportsmanlike manner. I will require the same of my hunting partners.
3. I pledge to respect the activities and beliefs of other hunters and nonhunters.
4. If I see a game law violation, I pledge to report it to FWP immediately.
5. I pledge to ask for landowner permission to hunt.
6. I pledge to hunt according to "fair chase."
7. I pledge to develop my hunting and shooting skills.
8. I pledge to support wildlife conservation programs.
9. I will teach others the skills, techniques, rules, and ethics of a true hunter.
10. I pledge to make full use of any animal I take.

\*This code is compiled from several sources including the NRA and the Kansas Hunter Education Manual



### What can I do when I see someone breaking the law?

People who kill animals out of season, who hunt without a license, or who hunt after legal shooting hours are called poachers.

Please report any poachers or any suspicious hunting activity by calling Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' toll free phone number 24 hours per day.

**POACHERS ARE CRIMINALS**  
**REPORT VIOLATORS**  
**1-800-TIP-MONT or 1-800-847-6668**

## Chapter Two Quiz

1. We have hunting laws to protect: (Mark the correct answer(s).)  
☐ wildlife  
☐ people
2. Hunting is a right, not a privilege. (Mark the correct answer.)  
☐ true  
☐ false
3. Hunters can help maintain a positive public image by: (Mark the correct answer.)  
☐ wearing bloody hunting clothing to town  
☐ bragging in public about how many animals they kill  
☐ respecting the needs and wishes of other people
4. When is it okay to be irresponsible? (Mark the correct answer.)  
☐ when nobody else can see you  
☐ when your behavior doesn't hurt anyone  
☐ never
5. A fair chase ethic includes actions and an attitude that show: (Mark the correct answer.)  
☐ an interest in killing as many animals as possible  
☐ respect for wildlife  
☐ a desire to break the law
6. Just because something is legal does not automatically mean it is fair or responsible. (Mark the correct answer.)  
☐ true  
☐ false
7. List three behaviors of a responsible hunter.  

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8. Whose responsibility is it to know the laws and regulations before you go hunting?  
(Mark the correct answer.)

\_\_\_\_\_ yours  
\_\_\_\_\_ your parents  
\_\_\_\_\_ the leader of your hunting group

9. A responsible hunter follows the law and takes \_\_\_\_\_  
for his or her actions. (Fill in the blank with the correct answer.)

10. The job of the game warden is to: (Mark the correct answer(s).)

\_\_\_\_\_ tell you where to find deer and elk to hunt  
\_\_\_\_\_ make sure that all hunting laws and regulations are followed